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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, USAID/W FOR AFR/AA, CONSTANCE NEWMAN,
AFR/WA, MICHAEL KARBELING, GH/AA, ANN PETERSON, GH/CH,
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/21/2014

TAGS: PREL PGOV FAID SOCI NI

SUBJECT: POLIO: VACCINATION PROGRAM RAMPING UP?

REF: A. ABUJA 1258

- 1B. ABUJA 1185
- 1C. ABUJA 1132
- 1D. ABUJA 971 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN CAMPBELL FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) AND (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Kano Governor Ibrahim Shekarau issued a statement authorizing the resumption of the polio vaccination program on July 16, saying that he was satisfied as to the safety of the vaccine. It remains unclear whether the federal or state government will control the program, but the donor community has put its support behind the state. Sources at the Ministry of Health say that vaccination will begin on July 28, a date which has not been confirmed by Kano State government officials. With the statement, the immediate hurdle has been cleared, but the hard part begins: convincing people to participate after over a year of negative publicity. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) After 11 months, Kano State Governor Ibrahim Shekarau issued a statement authorizing the resumption of the polio vaccination program. In a statement read on July 16, he said that Kano State was "satisfied" that the vaccine was safe and requested the Ministry of Health to "begin all preparations for the conduct of vaccinations." He called for the vaccinations to begin "as soon as possible."

13. (U) It remains unclear whether the federal or state government will control the program, but the donor community has put its support behind the state. In a recent meeting, donors were firmly behind the decentralization of the program, devolving control to state health ministries. One of Shekarau's aides could not confirm to PolOff whether the program would be managed by the state or federal program, but said he was unconcerned with that detail. "Everything is being prepared to begin, details of management can be sorted out later," he said.

14. (U) Sources at the Ministry of Health say that vaccination will begin on July 28. Kano State officials would only say that vaccinations would begin "soon."

15. (C) COMMENT: With this simple statement, the hurdle blocking progress for the past year has been cleared. The negative publicity, distrust of the federal government and western donors, and the acrimony over the issue have all been in the public eye and suspicions remain at the grassroots level. The hard part begins now: respected leaders must take the lead in encouraging mass participation in the program to stem the spread of the disease even further afield.

CAMPBELL